



For Immediate Release
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**Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
Regarding Economic Stimulus
(as prepared)**

The Book of Proverbs teaches: "Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

This afternoon, the Senate will begin to address whether we honor our mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers. The Senate will begin to address whether we extend needed stimulus checks to 20 million seniors whom the House left behind.

The author Pearl S. Buck said: "Our society must make it . . . possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members."

This afternoon, the Senate will begin to be tested. The Senate will be tested whether it cares for 20 million seniors, or deserts them, as did the House of Representatives.

America's seniors deserve to get stimulus checks every bit as much as other Americans. They worked hard all their lives. They paid a lifetime of taxes. They contribute to the economy.

And with the economy turning down, seniors can use the stimulus checks every bit as much as other Americans. Everyone knows that the Social Security check does not pay the bills. The average retiree's Social Security check is \$1,079 a month. And with the current hard times, gasoline, food, and healthcare costs are all rising.

Two out of three Social Security beneficiaries get most of their income from Social Security. Social Security is the only income for nearly one in five seniors. Without Social Security, most older Americans would live in poverty.

Because they can use the money, seniors are excellent targets for economic stimulus checks. Because they can use the money, they will spend it quickly.

Americans over age 65 spend 92 percent of their incomes. Households headed by a person over age 75 spend 98 percent. That's higher than any other demographic group over the age of 25. And that means that a check sent to a senior will have a greater bang for the buck in terms of helping the economy.

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The Finance Committee amendment will help 20 million seniors who were left out of the House bill. The Finance Committee amendment will provide seniors with rebate checks of \$500. The House bill will not help those 20 million seniors.

And the Finance Committee amendment would also provide rebate checks for 250,000 disabled veterans who receive at least \$3,000 in non-taxable disability compensation. The Finance Committee amendment would make them eligible to receive the same \$500 rebate as wage earners and Social Security recipients. The Veterans Administration would distribute the rebate. The House bill does not provide disabled veterans who don't pay taxes with rebate checks.

And the Finance Committee amendment would provide an additional 13 weeks of unemployment insurance. And high unemployment states would qualify for an extra 13 weeks. The House bill does not provide an extension of unemployment insurance.

Almost a million more Americans are unemployed today than were a year ago. And 69,000 additional unemployed workers filed claims just last week.

The Finance Committee amendment had been endorsed by the AARP, the Seniors Coalition, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, the American Legion, the United Spinal Association, and the Disabled American Veterans.

These major groups support the Finance Committee amendment. They support it because it is the right thing to do.

And so, let us listen to ours fathers, who gave us life, and not despise our mothers. Let us not desert our seniors, or disabled veterans, or unemployed workers. And let us move to proceed to the stimulus bill.

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